CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for purchasing goods and services online, comprising:

means for prompting a user to specify preferences regarding at least one type of merchandise or service of interest to a user by having the user answer a plurality of questions, the means then retrieving data responsive to the indicated preferences from at least one database and displaying said data on a display device.

2. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the means are comprised of:

a questionnaire database that prompts the user to answer a plurality of questions to specify user preferences with regard to the at least one type of merchandise;

a merchandise database having textual and graphical data regarding the at least one type of merchandise, the merchandise database using artificial intelligence coordination rules to match the merchandise with accessories and having links to databases for other types of merchandise;

a search engine using comparison functions, artificial intelligence rules and user input rules;

a layout and schematics program for preparing and displaying a floor plan depicting merchandise selected by the user, wherein the dimensions and other architectural features of the floor plan are provided by the user;

a models database having images of models;

an animation and morphing program for providing image and motion creation and morphing to models selected from the model database by the user, wherein the selected

models wear merchandise selected by the user, the user able to alter the models and the models' features;

a temporary working database in which the user works while using the system; and

a personal folder database for storing the data from the temporary working database.

3. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the user specifies user preferences by either checking at least one box in front of a possible choices or clinking on a text string representing that choice.

4. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system provides the user with the names of a plurality of vendors for the merchandise specified by the user.

5. The system according to Claim 4, wherein after the user selects a vendor, the system asks the user to specify additional information regarding the products of the vendor selected by the user.

6. The system according to Claim 1, wherein based on specifications provided by the user, the system prepares and displays a recommended floor plan showing each item of merchandise selected by the user.

7. The system according to Claim 6, wherein the system prompts the user to examine and specify specifications and configurations for each merchandise item.

8. The system according to Claim 7, wherein the user uses an input device to click on an individual item of merchandise shown on the display device to determine which goods to configure.

9. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system retrieves data in response to user specified preferences from a first database and stores the retrieved data in a second local database which is smaller then the first database, thereby enabling the user to interact with the system without having to traffic data through a network and thus at a faster speed than would be possible if the user had to traffic data through the network.

10. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system uses menus and data entry tables to solicit preferences from the user.

11. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system uses predetermined intelligence rules together with preferences input by the user to search merchandise databases and select and recommend merchandise and accessories to the user.

12. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system selects a model from a model database and morphs the model using specifications provided by the user.

13. The system according to Claim 12, wherein the system uses an animation graphics composition morphing program to cause the model to be animated and to engage in a full range of movement displayed on the display device.

14. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system includes both inclusion and exclusion mechanisms to assist the user in making preference selections.

15. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system includes an automated select all feature wherein all possible preferences are automatically included unless excluded by the user.

16. The system according to Claim 1, wherein at any stage of interaction with the system, an array of recommendations can be presented on the display device, the array able to be narrowed or enhanced interactively as the system gains input from the user.

17. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the system can display a plurality of ensembles of clothing for viewing by the user, each ensemble able to be altered with ensemble items moved from one ensemble to another, colors and patterns changed, and reassembled interactively, the ensembles able to be displayed using models and animation specified by the user.

18. The system according to Claim 17, wherein a user can purchase an entire ensemble, or any part of the ensemble.

19. The system according to Claim 16, wherein the user can specify additional desired matching items to be retrieved and displayed for viewing that may not be included in the array.

20. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the user can override a predetermined intelligence rule used by the system to make recommendations to the user.

21. The system according to Claim 20, wherein the predetermined intelligence rules pertain to determining whether two colors match.